

# Notes from the Streams



## Ending the season

WCO William Crisp and I patrolled the Allegheny Reservoir on Labor Day. The holiday essentially marks the end of the boating season. The last boat we boarded was a pontoon boat carrying six passengers. As we approached, a little girl said to Officer Crisp, "You're here to protect us." Indeed, that was our goal, to ensure that they had all their safety equipment. The little girl's statement made my day. It was a great way to end the holiday and the boating season.—WCO Walter A. Buckman, Lackawanna County.

## Day of stocking

During trout season, the regional office receives many calls from anglers requesting the actual day of an inseason stocking (which we cannot provide). The callers try every trick in the book to obtain the actual date of stocking from us. I thought I heard them all until one angler called and said he wanted to avoid the usual crowd on the day of the stocking. He then asked if I would tell him the day after the actual day of stocking.—Emil Svetahor, Assistant Supervisor, Southwest Regional Office.

## That's dedication!

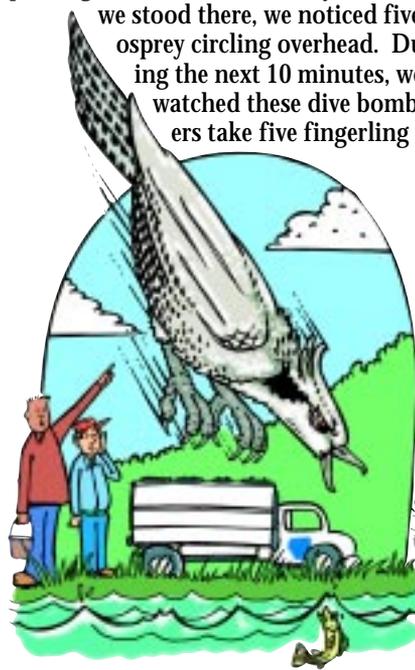
Last January, one of my deputies and his girlfriend stopped me and asked when the opening day of bass season was. I replied that I would check it out for the exact date since they needed it precisely. It seems that they were planning their wedding and they did not want the date to conflict with opening weekend so that he would be able to work. That's dedication and a very understanding future spouse.—WCO Barry A. Mechling, Northern Dauphin County.

## Dive bombers

A frequent complaint from many of our co-op trout nurseries is missing fish. They received this amount of fingerlings to raise and only have half that number left for stocking the following year.

There are many reasons for the missing trout. Diseases take their toll. Some escape. Poachers are also active in some areas and can really frustrate the hard-working folks trying to raise some nice trout for public stocking. Sometimes these poachers have four legs, sometimes two.

Some of the most effective ones have wings, and we had an opportunity to witness their skill this past October. The Fish and Boat Commission's truck, with 2,000 trout on board, arrived at the meeting place, the Queen City Co-op Nursery in Allentown, at noon. Several stocking helpers were waiting at the parking lot next to the nursery, and as we stood there, we noticed five osprey circling overhead. During the next 10 minutes, we watched these dive bombers take five fingerling



trout, including a golden rainbow, and miss several more. We had to leave, so we were unable to observe their total take for that afternoon, but they must have enjoyed a few more snacks before retiring for the day.

We hope that by now they have moved south, but with the easy pickings provided by the nursery, they might become year-round residents.—Fred Mussel, Assistant Supervisor, Southeast Regional Office.

## Catch of the day

I received a call from a former seasonal WCO in the Northeast Region. He let me know that he would be in the area, and that he wanted to fish the Susquehanna River for walleyes. As luck

would have it, I had the day off. I called fellow seasonal officer WCO Warner to see if he would be interested in joining us. He said he would, so we all got together around midday. It was cold and windy, so the fishing was slow. WCO Warner had a previous obligation, so he had to leave early. I and the former seasonal officer moved to an area on the river commonly known as the "Point." On just his second cast, the former seasonal landed a 20-inch walleye. A few minutes later, I hooked into a good fish. As I was reeling in a good walleye, my companion reached down and grabbed the fish. As his leg slid into the water, I told him not to let go of the fish. While keeping a firm hold on the fish, his other leg went in the water. As he was slowly descending into the water, I reached down and landed an 18-inch walleye and a 180-pound WCO.—WCO David G. Kaneski, Northern Wayne County.

## Free fish!

While stocking trout in Skippack Creek, I was short on help, so I tried to get some fishermen to come up to the stocking truck to carry buckets. I walked out onto a bridge below the hole they were fishing and yelled, "Free fish! Come and get 'em!" One angler became particularly excited and ran across the stream and up the bank. As he arrived at the truck, he asked if the fish were really free. I told him they were indeed "free." However, I explained, "You need to carry the bucket down to the stream, dump the trout in the water, and then catch them with you rod and reel." He then kicked at the dirt and mumbled something.

We try to spread the fish out to provide everyone with a fair chance of catching them, but come on—how easy do you want us to make it?—WCO Gerald B. Barton, Southern Montgomery County.

## 50 is the limit!

While patrolling Conodoguinet Creek one summer afternoon with Deputy Wildlife CO John Lynch, we observed an individual wading through the creek collecting fishbait at the Good Hope Dam. After verifying his valid fishing license we asked what he was catching. He retrieved a large bucket

and gave it to us. We found the bucket to be filled to the top with freshwater clams. As I explained to the fisherman that the daily limit for fishbait was 50 (species combined), DWCO Lynch began to count the specimens. After several minutes of counting, DWCO Lynch reported that the bucket contained 1,004 freshwater clams and one crayfish. Explaining to the fisherman that the violation carries a minimum fine of \$25.00 with an additional \$10.00 for each fishbait over the limit (you do the math), he was more than happy to settle on a field acknowledgment for a lesser amount!—*WCO Craig Garman, Cumberland County.*

### Late bloomer

In recent years the controversy regarding “global warming” and “greenhouse gases” has not diminished. A recent report stated that the nine warmest winters in recent history have occurred in the past 11 years. While not necessarily an indicator of this warming trend, an episode involving technicians of our Environmental Services Division might cause one to ponder this phenomenon.

While along a stream in the central part of the state, they happened to come across what was obviously a snapping turtle nest that had been disturbed by a raccoon or some other animal looking for a meal. A few egg remnants and one or two surviving newly hatched turtles were still to be seen struggling in the nest. Even though this discovery would not normally be unusual, it is fascinating and curious that it occurred in late December after Christmas!

Female snapping turtles “normally” deposit their eggs in late spring with the eggs hatching a few weeks later. Apparently, the unusually warm fall we were experiencing triggered a very late egg-laying season by at least one snapper.—*WCO Larry Baker, Juniata/Mifflin Counties.*

### Click your heels 3 times

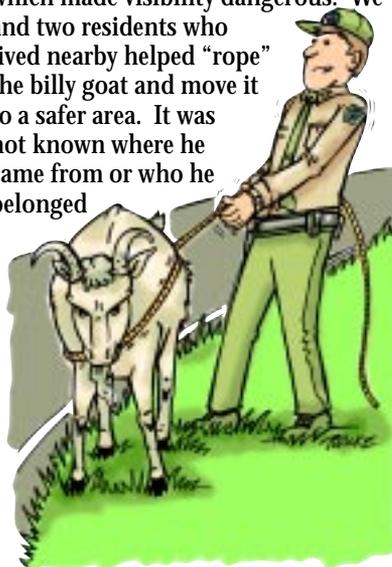
While on boat patrol last summer, we received a radio call from WCO Creyer, indicating that a boat was underway, towing a skier with no required observer on board. We proceeded to the location and stopped the offending op-

erator. After completing an inspection of the boat, we informed the operator of the reason for the stop. He explained that he and his wife had recently moved to Pennsylvania from the Midwest, from his native state of Kansas, and further related that Kansas does not require an observer if the boat is equipped with a rearview mirror. It had been a long day and I just couldn’t keep from saying, “Well sir, I’m sorry, but you’re not in Kansas anymore!”—*WCO Barry J. Pollock, Potter County.*

### Job description?

During my days spent patrolling Delaware County, I never knew what a day in the field would bring. Being so close to the city of Philadelphia, it was hard to guess what you were going to run into next.

One evening during rush-hour traffic, I was patrolling the area of Chester Creek, traveling east on Ivy Mills Road, when I came upon a state trooper who had pulled off to the side of the road, and was walking along the berm. I asked if he needed my assistance, and he said yes. I noticed a billy goat grazing within a foot of the side of the road. The trooper advised me that the reason he had stopped was that the billy goat was not confined by any fence at the road and there was a hump in the road, which made visibility dangerous. We and two residents who lived nearby helped “rope” the billy goat and move it to a safer area. It was not known where he came from or who he belonged



to. The passer-by looked at us somewhat curious, wondering what our job description really was.

In a roundabout way, we were trying to prevent an accident, though it was difficult to convey that message to passers-by with curious looks.—*WCO Terrance L. Kane, Lebanon/Southern Dauphin Counties.*

### I surrender

During my career as a WCO I have encountered many unusual situations involving violations. However, this past trout season was the first time I’ve seen someone “surrender.” While patrolling Manatawny Creek, DWCO Tod Seachrist and I were flagged down by a group of fishermen with whom I’m familiar. One of the group explained to me in a very excited manner that two fishermen caught their limit, and then continued to fish and pass the trout one caught off to his partner. The group started to berate these two quite severely, and one of the group left in his vehicle, telling the two fishermen he was going to go find a warden. The two fishermen must have figured they better get away from this group of upset anglers while they still had a chance, and they departed the scene. The group provided me with a detailed description of the two individuals, their truck, and direction of travel. I said to DWCO Seachrist that we should check the creek to see if these two may have just moved to another spot. We had no sooner departed from our group of upset anglers when I received a radio call from DWCO Leo Henry, who was patrolling farther upstream. DWCO Henry explained, in a somewhat confused manner, that he had been stopped by an individual who told him that he had caught 11 trout that day and had given three to his friend, and that he thought we were looking for him. DWCO Henry asked me if I had any idea what this man was talking about. I explained to DWCO Henry what had just taken place downstream, and advised him to issue the man a ticket for exceeding the daily limit, which he did.

I wish all over-the-limit cases were this easy. If anyone else out there has a guilty conscience, feel free to flag me down when you see me and confess.—*WCO Ray Bednarchik, Northern Montgomery County.*



## Stream trivia

While working recently quite extensively with the Fisheries Management Database, I noticed that many stream names use common words. Many of these names are associated with things that are a big part of Pennsylvania's heritage (Indian, Laurel, Trout, etc.). Can you guess the most popular names for Pennsylvania streams?

Here are the top five words used for Pennsylvania stream names, based on waters surveyed by Commission biologists:

5. Trout - 24 waters.
4. Beaver - 25 waters.
3. Pine - 30 waters.
2. Laurel - 34 waters.
1. Mill - 54 waters.

The best of the rest, with the number of times each word appears in a different stream name: Bear, 19; Black, 13; Buffalo, 10; Elk, 15; Fishing, 15; Indian, 12; Lick, 14; Long, 11; Mud, 14; Sand, 20; Spring, 14; Stone, 15; Sugar, 19; Two, 10; White, 13; and Wolf, 12.

I didn't include any names here that didn't come up at least 10 times.—*Robert Weber, Fisheries Technician.*

## Fishing derby

Last year, Penn State held its first winter trout fishing derby at Perez Lake, in its Stone Valley Recreation Area. Initially planned as an ice fishing derby, the unseasonably warm winter resulted in open-water conditions for the event. Some 120 anglers registered and participated in the derby, 30 of whom were under 16 years of age. Fishing over an abundant population of trout stocked by the Commission as part of the late-winter extended season program, the vast majority of anglers had a successful outing. Many participants commended the Commission and Penn State for providing and enhancing fishing and boating opportunities at what is historically a slow time of year. Hats off to the Stone Valley Recreation Area team of Dale Roth, Angela Kline, Charlene Detwiler, Jackie Ryan, Tim McCartney,

and Denny Porter for planning and implementing the derby, the overwhelming success of which may prove to establish it as an annual winter event.—*WCO Alan D. Robinson, Huntingdon County.*

## Some backcast

Lehigh County's Jordan Parkway attracts a wide variety of recreationalists. These include mountain bikers, who use the network of woodland trails, and trout fishermen, who fish the stocked Jordan Creek, which winds through the park. During the first week of trout season, my wife, Amy, an avid cyclist, was maintaining a quick pace on one of the park's trails. As she broke from the woods and directly crossed a pipeline right-of-way about 30 feet from the stream, she suddenly heard a slap and felt a sharp stinging sensation in the "seat of her pants." Momentum and momentary confusion over what could



have happened carried her into the woods again before she stopped to check her stinging backside. Besides a welt, Amy found a wispy tippet leading to a beadhead streamer, which had bounced off her derriere (the slap and sting) and had caught in the thigh portion of her riding shorts without penetrating the skin. Amy looked back to see a fly angler in the stream, facing center channel, fiddling with his tackle. He apparently didn't realize or want to acknowledge the route that his backcast had taken. His timing must have been perfect, however. Amy was too embar-

rassed to return to ask the angler if he wanted to remove his streamer. When I arrived home from work, Amy announced, "I have a lure for you, but first you'll have to remove it from my shorts."—*Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann.*

## Planning prevents problems

Before the opening hour of trout season, Cadet Corey Britcher and I checked boats for safety equipment before they launched at Lily Lake. Three boats were not allowed to launch because they forgot to bring along Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices. Two boaters launched boats without putting the plug in. Several tried to launch without removing the tiedowns from their boats and trailers. One boater snapped his trolling motor off at the ramp. Eleven boats failed to have sound-producing devices. Several new boat owners needed to practice backing their boats down a ramp.

We checked approximately 70 boats from 5:15 a.m. until 8 a.m. All in all, it was a fun morning, and most of the boaters having problems will not make the same mistake twice.—*WCO David T. Corl, Southern Luzerne County.*

## Message to whom?

Opening Day of trout along the Wissahickon Creek in Philadelphia was as quiet as any of us could remember. As we patrolled the stream, we encountered parents teaching their children the joy of trout fishing and groups of friends celebrating their annual opening day reunions. Everyone was well-behaved, and the creek looked cleaner than the day before. We were all very pleased that our efforts as conservation officers had kept everything under control.

As WCO John Pedrick made his last patrol, he stopped to pick up two plastic grocery bags blowing in the wind. As he inspected them, he noticed writing on one. It said, "Worms, Do Not Eat." After we had a good laugh, we wondered if this was a message to the fish or to this angler's kids.—*DWCO John Conlow, Philadelphia County.*

## Firsthand look

While I was on a field training assignment in Somerset County, WCO Tom

Qualters and I spotted two older teenagers “handling” four trout before the season opener. While we were interviewing the boys, one boy asked if we had a “ride-along” program. He said he wanted to become a WCO and that he was interested in learning what we do. Officer Qualters replied, “Unfortunately, you are getting a firsthand look at what we do right now.”—*WCO Cadet Tom Stuckey.*

### Angler needs a calendar

Recently, I spent the week before opening day and the opening weekend of trout season in southern Luzerne County on field training. During this time, WCO Dave Corl and I spent the week before watching the trout streams in an attempt to foil would-be poachers. During this time we stopped two gentlemen who were fishing in the lower Lehigh (approved trout water). The one gentleman told us that they were not doing anything wrong, and that he had the seasons and limits page out of the summary book to prove it. He retrieved the page from his license holder and said, “See, we have one more day before the season closes March 15.” WCO Corl and I looked at each other in amazement. However, the gentleman was much more surprised when we told him that the date was April 14, and that he was fishing in closed water. Having that page in with the license was a good idea, but it also helps to have a calendar.—*WCO Cadet Corey Britcher, Stackhouse Training School.*

### Fax machine snake

Along with the warming rays of the spring sunshine come numerous calls about snakes in basements, garages, buildings, and homes. On one of these warm days a resident arrived home to find a large black snake resting in her fax machine. The head and several inches were protruding out the front, while the remainder was inside and out the back of the machine. She tried to pull the snake slowly backward out of the machine. Realizing it was impossible for a snake to go in reverse, and not wanting to harm the reptile, she gently persuaded the snake to crawl forward and through the fax machine. After its removal, did she want it re-

lated? No. “I put it down through the hole in the corner of the floor, where it probably came from,” she said.

It’s rare we meet someone who appreciates the benefits of black snakes as much as this woman. I gave her the fax number of the regional office and told her next time, just fax the snake to the Southcentral Regional Office—*WCO Lee Creyer, Southern York County.*



### Too many fish

Only a few years ago, a seven-mile stretch of Penns Creek became the pilot area for special regulations that have since been termed “All-Tackle Trophy Trout.” This strikes a happy chord with many anglers. Since this stretch has been managed as a wild trout fishery, the brown trout population has been increasing substantially, so much so that the first year class of wild brown trout is abundant and averaging 10 to 12 inches. What do anglers complain about now? They can’t seem to get at the “big ones” because those 10-inchers jump on their lines so quickly!—*Brian B. Burger, Assistant Supervisor, Northcentral Region.*

### Boating violations

DWCO O’Bryan, WCO O’Malley, and I were on boat patrol one afternoon when we stopped a New Jersey-registered boat for a wake violation in the Essington Anchorage. After completing a safety boarding, we were able to list eight separate violations, any of which could easily have contributed to the injury or death of the operator or a

passenger in the event of an accident. Most disheartening to me was the fact that there were eight people on board this boat, five of them children, and there were only four PFDs on board. Of the four, only one was a child-sized PFD. We loaned the operator four PFDs and escorted him back to his launch point.

The operator of this boat had a New Jersey boat operators license. To obtain this license, one has to take a test similar to that of our Basic Boating course. When I asked the operator if he remembered any of the sections involving safety equipment and safe operation, he replied, “I forget.”

Needless to say, the operator of this boat was cited. In addition to the fine he faces a potential suspension of his boating privileges.—*WCO Robert Croll, Delaware County.*

### Ten Mile County Park

While on patrol, I decided to check the Ten Mile County Park boat ramp. When I arrived, I encountered an angler who I’ve talked to many times. On this particular day, the angler seemed very excited and couldn’t wait until I got out of the car to tell me what was on his mind. He said that he caught the biggest fish of his life right here last week. He said he decided to try fishing for catfish, so he bought some chicken liver because he heard that it was the best bait for catfish. He described how he cast the line and all of a sudden his rod almost ended up in the creek. He said he set the hook and the fish took off for a boat that was in front of him. He yelled to the angler in the boat to see if he could net the catfish he hooked. The angler in the boat said, “It’s not a catfish—it’s a tiger musky.”

After landing the fish, the angler in the boat measured the musky at 34 inches. The angler in the boat brought the musky to shore for him and asked, “What kind of setup did you use to land this musky?” The angler reluctantly replied, “chicken liver.” The boater said, “Excuse me—chicken liver? I have hundreds of dollars worth of musky lures in my tackle box, and you caught this monster on chicken liver! Well, I guess it’s off to the market I go.”

This just goes to show that fishing is always unpredictable, and that unpredictability keeps it enjoyable—*WCO Erik P. Shellgren, Greene County.*